

'Scenery and Chardonnay': A Visitor Perspective of the New Zealand Winery Experience

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Abstract

It is widely recognised that the tourism experience involves pre-visit anticipation, travel to and from the site and post-visit reminiscence or recollection, yet to date few studies have explored the link between these elements. Winery visitation presents an excellent opportunity to explore these phases of the travel experience as wine is present pre-visit, on-site and post-visit. In 1999 this study set out to explore these links by surveying visitors to 33 New Zealand wineries and then tracking their behaviour six to eight months post-visit via a postal survey.

From an initial sample of 1,090, 636 follow-up surveys were distributed with 358 usable surveys returned. The on-site survey explored the pre-visit and on-site wine habits and winery visitation behaviour of respondents, while 97 semi-structured interviews were also undertaken in order to provide further detail on some aspects of the on-site visit. The follow-up survey included an exploration of the respondents' on-going purchasing and consumption of wine as well as experiential elements such as recollection of the visit, word-of-mouth behaviour and enduring levels of satisfaction. A number of *a priori* segmentation criteria drawn from wine consumer behaviour and wine tourism literature have been applied in the analysis of the data in order to provide a detailed discussion of the various elements of this multi-phased experience.

Many regional differences were observed in the demographic profile of respondents, while the age profile of male and female visitors were also significantly different. This has dispelled the myth of a 'typical winery visitor' put forward by many early wine tourism researchers and highlights the need for detailed market analysis for wineries and wine regions. Pre-visit wine habits and winery visitation behaviour were influenced by gender, age/generation and country of origin. However, the most significant influence was between different levels of wine knowledge. This highlights the importance of wine education and interpretation, which was also identified as an important part of the winery visit by many respondents. Examination of the on-site experience identified important regional differences in the nature of the winery experience and led to the coining of the term *touristic terroir* to describe the nuances of the regional experience. Almost half of the respondents made a post-visit purchase, while there were moderately high levels of enduring satisfaction and high levels of word-of-mouth behaviour. Post-visit purchases were primarily influenced by taste, but experiential elements of the visit (including sharing the wine or winery experience with others, memory of the visit and the service received) were also moderately influential.

This study has provided an insight into wine tourism and the behaviour of the winery visitor. It is the first and, to date, only nationwide survey of winery visitors anywhere in the world and one of only a handful of tourism studies that have attempted to track the behaviour of respondents. It has identified important connections between the on-site experience, experiential aspects of the post-visit experience and the purchasing and consumption behaviour of winery visitors. It also provides a

framework for the study of other areas of tourism including souvenir purchases, holiday photography, food and tourism and tourist behaviour more broadly.

Profile

Richard commenced his academic career while still enrolled in his PhD, beginning with a lecturing position at the University of Western Sydney (Richmond campus) in 2000, then two and half years as a Senior Lecturer in Tourism Marketing at La Trobe University (Melbourne, Australia) and ultimately returning to the Department of Tourism in July 2003 as Senior Lecturer. Richard has been on the management committee of the New Zealand Food and Wine Tourism Network since its inception in 2004 and has been chair of the committee since 2008. In 2007/8 he held the position of Visiting Professor at Reims Management School (France) where he worked with the Chair in Champagne Management on a number of research projects. Richard has more than 100 publications (including 2 books and more than 40 journal articles, book chapters and refereed conference papers) on food and wine tourism, wine marketing, regional development and several other areas of tourism.